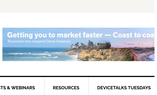

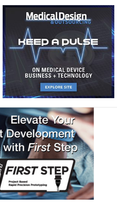

The Nuremberg Code and its impact on clinical research

APRIL 9, 2019 BY MASSDEVICE

The Nuremberg Code is one of the most influential documents in the history of clinical research.

Natalie Jarmusik, Clinical Research Associate, IMARC Research

The Nuremberg Code is one of the most influential documents in the history of clinical research.

Created more than 70 years ago following the notorious World War II experiments, this written document established 10 ethical principles for protecting human subjects.

We'll take a closer look at its origins, its guidelines and its enduring impact.

What Is the Nuremberg Code?

When World War II ended in 1945, the victorious Allied powers enacted the International Military Tribunal on November 19th, 1945. As part of the Tribunal, a series of trials were held against major war criminals and Nazi sympathizers holding leadership positions in political, military, and economic areas. The first trial conducted under the Nuremberg Military Tribunals in 1947 became known as The Doctors' Trial, in which 23 physicians from the German Nazi Party were tried for crimes against humanity for the atrocious experiments they carried out on unwilling prisoners of war. Many of the grotesque medical experiments took place at the Auschwitz concentration camp, where Jewish prisoners were tattooed with dehumanizing numbers onto their arms; numbers that would later be used to identify their bodies after death.

The Doctors' Trial is officially titled "The United States of America v. Karl Brandt, et al.," and it was conducted at the Palace of Justice in Nuremberg, Bavaria, Germany. The trial was conducted here because this was one of the few largely undamaged buildings that remained intact from extensive Allied bombing during the war. It is also said to have been symbolically chosen because it was the ceremonial birthplace of the Nazi Party. Of the 23 defendants, 16 were found guilty, of which seven received death sentences and nine received prison sentences ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment. The other 7 defendants were acquitted.

The verdict also resulted in the creation of the Nuremberg Code, a set of ten ethical principles for human experimentation.

What Are The Nuremberg Code's Ethical Guidelines For Research?

The Nuremberg Code aimed to protect human subjects from enduring the kind of cruelty and exploitation the prisoners endured at concentration camps. The 10 elements of the code are:

1. Voluntary consent is essential
2. The results of any experiment must be for the greater good of society
3. Human experiments should be based on previous animal experimentation
4. Experiments should be conducted by avoiding physical/mental suffering and injury
5. No experiments should be conducted if it is believed to cause death/disability
6. The risks should never exceed the benefits
7. Adequate facilities should be used to protect subjects
8. Experiments should be conducted only by qualified scientists
9. Subjects should be able to end their participation at any time
10. The scientist in charge must be prepared to terminate the experiment when injury, disability, or death is likely to occur

Want to learn more about the history of clinical research? Take a minute to watch the video and explore our History of Clinical Research timeline for more detail.

The Significance Of The Nuremberg Code

The Nuremberg Code is one of several foundational documents that influenced the principles of Good Clinical Practice (GCP).

Good Clinical Practice is an attitude of excellence in research that provides a standard for study design, implementation, conduct and analysis. More than a single document, it is a compilation of many thoughts, ideas and lessons learned throughout the history of clinical research worldwide.

Several other documents further expanded upon the principles outlined in the Nuremberg Code, including the Declaration of Helsinki, the Belmont Report and the Common Rule.

Although there has been updated guidance to Good Clinical Practice to reflect new trends and technologies, such as electronic signatures, these basic principles remain the same. The goal has always been—and always will be—to conduct ethical clinical trials and protect human subjects.

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- USF wins Patents for Humanity award for 3D-printed nasal swab
The University of South Florida received the Patents for Humanity award for its patent of a 3D-printed nasopharyngeal swab. Developers created the swab in the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic. It represented a solution to production disruptions during a time of critical need for COVID-19 testing. The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) awarded...[...]

- Titan Medical shows off Enos surgical robot's next-gen design
Titan Medical is already working on the second generation of its Enos surgical robot and showing off the features in a new video. (You can watch the video at the bottom of this page.) Among other improvements, Enos 2.0 has a new trick up its sleeve. There is a third instrument arm, compared to the...[...]

- UCSD researchers develop electronic hemoglobin-monitoring patch
University of California San Diego (UCSD) researchers developed an electronic patch that can monitor biomolecules in deep tissues. The technology can monitor hemoglobin, providing medical professionals with access to crucial information for spotting life-threatening conditions. This includes malignant tumors, organ dysfunction, cerebral or gut hemorrhages and more. Researchers published a paper on the developments in...[...]

- Integer to exhibit at NANS annual meeting
Integer (NYSE:ITGR) announced that it plans to exhibit at the North American Neuromodulation Society (NANS) Annual Meeting this week. Plano, Texas-based Integer's showcase takes place at the meeting at Caesars Palace Convention Center in Las Vegas. It spans from Jan. 12 to Jan. 14. The company, situated at booth #529, intends to offer information about...[...]

- Henry Schein launches Practice Green sustainable products initiative
Citing the growing threat of climate change, Henry Schein (Nasdaq:HSIC) is launching an environmental sustainability initiative called Practice Green. Practice Green will identify medical and dental products that are reusable, recyclable, biodegradable, made from recycled materials or from a sustainable source. Medical device developers and their customers are increasingly focusing on sustainability. Efforts range from...[...]

- This AI-based smartphone helps diabetes patients manage blood sugar
Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) combined AI and diabetes experts to develop a smartphone app to help manage blood sugar levels. OHSU biomedical engineer Peter Jacobs and OHSU endocrinologist Dr. Leah Wilson lead this project. They plan to organize a randomized clinical trial to evaluate an enhanced app used in concert with diabetes education...[...]

- FDA hits Olympus with warning letters after factory inspections
The FDA today released warning letters against Olympus Medical Systems Corp. and Olympus Corp. subsidiary Aizu Olympus following inspections of their endoscope and reprocessor manufacturing facilities. The warning letters allege medical device reporting (MDR) and quality system violations at the manufacturing operations. "Olympus' highest priority is providing patients and users with safe and effective medical...[...]

- Canon Medical Systems inks strategic partnership with Scimage
Canon Medical Systems USA announced that it completed a strategic partnership with cloud-native enterprise image management company Scimage. Los Altos, California-based Scimage also provides PACS and image exchange solutions for the healthcare industry. The two companies plan to use the partnership to broaden and advance Canon's outreach in hemodynamics with its Fysicon QMAPP Homo portfolio...[...]

- ResMed's new factory brings it closer to meeting CPAP demand after Philips recall
The opening of a new plant — billed as the biggest of its kind on Earth — brings ResMed closer to catching up with skyrocketing CPAP demand. That was one of the big takeaways from ResMed CEO Mick Farrell's talk at the annual J.P. Morgan Healthcare Conference in San Francisco yesterday. The San Diego-based company has found...[...]

- Could mixed reality boost blood donations?
Mixed reality technology will aim to ease and entertain blood donors while they're in the chair under a pilot program from Abbott and Blood Centers of America. Blood donors will wear mixed reality (a combination of virtual reality and augmented reality) headsets. They will find themselves in "a whimsical garden while listening to soothing music,...[...]

- European Commission endorses MDR transition delay
An MDR transition delay is one step closer to reality following concerns that the current timeline could lead to medical device shortages. The European Commission on Jan. 6 officially endorsed a proposal to give medical device manufacturers more time to certify their devices under new Medical Devices Regulation (MDR) rules. The proposed MDR transition delay...[...]

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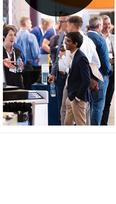
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